

committed to the Lake Tahoe Basin for clean-up and conservation efforts. But most importantly, the majority of these dollars were available to State and local agencies of Lake Tahoe, and not a Federal bureaucracy.

The agreement reached at Lake Tahoe is a shining example of concerns of environmentalists, conservationists, and even private property owners are not mutually exclusive. I commend all those involved, and look forward to the second annual Tahoe Summit to report on the positive and cooperative efforts that would truly benefit this gem in the sky.

SUPPORT THE PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS

(Mr. SANDLIN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SANDLIN. Madam Speaker, insurance companies, there they go again, attempting to mislead and deceive the American public. Television ads that they are placing all across this country incorrectly state that a Patients' Bill of Rights will make insurance premiums skyrocket.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Madam Speaker, the State of Texas enacted these protections that the insurance companies claim will increase premiums. The Texas experience proves that the insurance companies are dead wrong. One of those protections that is most often cited is the right to sue an HMO if treatment is denied.

Texas enacted a similar provision in 1997. There have been 516 complaints filed, half in favor of the patient, half in favor of the plan. Only three lawsuits have been filed, three lawsuits. That is hardly an explosion in a population of 20 million people.

Texas has some of the lowest premium rates in the entire country, and a study from the Kaiser Family Foundation found that liability accounted for only 3 to 13 cents per person per month in premiums, 3 to 13 cents. Mr. Speaker, the Democrats are working to put the needs of patients first. Let us enact a real Patients' Bill of Rights, not a bill of goods.

THE TAX RELIEF BILL

(Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Madam Speaker, Americans do not want, need, or deserve the highest taxes since World War II. For too long, our tax system has punished the very virtues Americans live by: hard work, marriage, savings, entrepreneurship, and freedom.

Look what happens when we play by the rules. If we get married, the government punishes us with taxes. If we save and invest for our family's future,

we pay taxes on the earnings. If we work hard to earn more, we end up paying what is called an alternative minimum tax, and lose all our family tax credits.

Finally, if we build a successful business and try to leave it to our kids, they will probably have to sell it in order to pay taxes when we die.

We want to end the assault on American values of family, savings, hard work, entrepreneurship, and freedom. It is our money, and we deserve to get it back. Americans do not want or need the President to spend our money on big government.

CONGRESS MUST PASS A MEANINGFUL PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS

(Ms. DELAURO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. DELAURO. Madam Speaker, for the past 2 years the American people have consistently asked for reasonable health care reforms that put those decisions back in the hands of doctors and patients and out of the hands of insurance company bureaucrats. People want to be able to choose their own doctor, to have access to the nearest emergency room, to see a specialist when necessary, to be free from HMO gag rules that prevent doctors from discussing treatment options for them, and to have the right to hold HMOs accountable for their decisions.

This Congress can and should pass these reforms now. The Members of this body who are doctors, whether Democrats or Republicans, almost all agree that these measures will benefit patients, make our health system stronger.

In the past year, thousands of Medicare recipients have been dropped by their HMOs. Millions of Americans have health care without basic coverage protections. We must pass a meaningful Patients' Bill of Rights. It must reflect our values for quality health care in this country. If we do, we can once again make the doctor's office a place for medical decisions.

TAXPAYERS KNOW WHICH PARTY IS CAREFUL WITH THEIR MONEY

(Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. Madam Speaker, for 40 years Democrats controlled Congress. For 40 years Democrats expanded government, spent beyond our needs, and called Republicans extremists or mean-spirited any time they tried to limit spending, cut wasteful government programs, and return power back to the State and local level. They have a 40-year track record of being the party for which fiscal discipline was the last thing on their minds.

So please, with all due respect, Democrat allegations that Republicans are being fiscally irresponsible for proposing tax relief in the face of increasing surpluses do not pass the credibility test. As C-Span junkies know, on virtually every amendment, on virtually every bill, Democrats attempt to increase spending and Republicans try to reduce spending.

How is it that increased spending is not a threat to fiscal discipline, but tax cuts are? Just how liberal am I to conclude the Democrat party has become if tax cuts are viewed as dangerous to the economy? One has to wonder just where they learned economics. Taxpayers know which party is careful with their money and which party is not.

WE NEED A TRUE PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS

(Mr. WEYGAND asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WEYGAND. Madam Speaker, how many times have we heard about a woman being denied to designate her OB-GYN doctor as her primary care physician? How many times have we heard about patients being denied emergency room care because an HMO bureaucrat has said no to the billing? How many times have we heard doctors say, we need more time to stay for this patient, but the HMO has said no?

Sometimes these decisions cause harm, sometimes even death. The Declaration of Independence states that we are endowed with certainly unalienable rights, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Serving as the foundation for our Bill of Rights, it is now time to call for a true Patients' Bill of Rights, a Patients' Bill of Rights that will provide real access to emergency room care, will strengthen the doctor-patient relationship, and most importantly, most importantly, provide patients with the right to hold insurance companies for wrongdoing, to be able to sue them when they are wrong.

Let us provide a true Patients' Bill of Rights, and declare a Declaration of Independence from the gag rules of HMOs. Please support a true Patients' Bill of Rights.

THE REPUBLICAN AGENDA IS THE BEST AGENDA

(Mr. SHIMKUS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SHIMKUS. Madam Speaker, what is the Republican agenda? The Republican agenda is the best agenda for all Americans. B is for bolstering our national security, E is for education excellence, S is for strengthening retirement security, and T is for tax relief for working Americans.

Republicans have the BEST agenda. It is a positive, forward-looking agenda